

Friday July 23rd, 2021, Friday in the Sixteenth Week of Ordinary Time Year I

Good Morning from St. Bernadette's.

I hope everyone is keeping safe and well, and following all the guidance we receive to overcome these strange times, and continuing to pray for all our needs at this time.

The God of the Israelites gives his rules for living to Moses. In Exodus 20:1-17 we have God giving Moses the Ten Commandments, a rule for the creation of the community that is to be the People of God. This is the poet John Bunyan's Rhyming version:

*Thou shalt not have another God but me.
Thou shalt not to an image bow the knee.
Thou shalt not take the name of God in vain;
See that the Sabbath thou do not profane.
Honour thy father and thy mother too;
In act, or thought, see thou no murder do.
From fornication keep thy body clean;
Thou shalt not steal, though thou be very mean.
Bear no false witness; keep thee without spot.
What is thy neighbours, see thou covet not.*

And in Matthew 13:18-23 Jesus explains the parable he taught in Wednesday's Gospel, The Parable of the Sower, whose seed falls on different types of ground. We pray that our hearts may be rich soil to accept the seed of the Lord and bear fruit a hundredfold.

*Jesus the Sower,
Whatever we are today,
whatever the mix of path, rock, thorns or soil,
help us to aspire to become the good soil in which an abundant harvest may flourish.
Help us to live out your teachings, being witnesses to your word.
Help us to bear fruit for your Kingdom, and store up fruits that will last for eternity.
Help us to challenge ourselves to become courageous advocates for truth and justice,
to stand up for those on the margins of society,
to be a voice for those who are rarely heard.
Help us to face our own challenges, whatever they may be,
with inspiration and courage so that we may succeed in all that we set out to do,
and bear fruit for you
in our hearts and souls, in the Church and in the world.*

Amen.

And if we need pure hearts to take the Word of God to our hearts, let us sing, 'Blest Are the Pure in Heart, For They Shall See Our God.' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMYVdGjUC2c>

And following on from our Feast of St. Mary Magdalen yesterday, today we have another feast of one of Church's greatest female Saints, Bridget of Sweden. From the age of seven onwards, Bridget had visions of Christ crucified. Her visions formed the basis for her activity - always with the emphasis on charity rather than spiritual favours. She lived her married life in the court of the Swedish king Magnus II. Mother of eight children - the second eldest was Saint Catherine of Sweden - Bridget lived the strict life of a penitent after her husband's death. Bridget constantly strove to exert her good influence over the worldly King Magnus, and while never fully reforming, he did give her land and buildings to found a monastery for men and women. This group eventually expanded into an Order known as the Bridgettines. In 1350, a year of Jubilee, Bridget braved a plague-stricken Europe to make a pilgrimage to Rome. Although she never returned to Sweden, her years in Rome were far from happy, being hounded by debts and by opposition to her work against Church abuses. A final pilgrimage to the Holy Land, marred by shipwreck and the death of her son, Charles, eventually led to her death in 1373. In 1999, Bridget, Saint Catherine of Siena, and Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, were named co-patronesses of Europe. The following is a rather lovely prayer attributed to St. Bridget, in the hope of a peaceful night's sleep. It's rather useful, especially if you are lying awake worrying about something, and not sure how to react or respond to something or someone, and the beautiful prayer ends by asking God to send his peace into your heart.

O Lord, make haste and illumine the night.

*Say to my soul that nothing happens without You permitting it,
and that nothing of what You permit is without comfort.*

*O Jesus, Son of God, You Who were silent in the presence of Your accusers,
restrain my tongue until I find what I should say and how to say it.*

Show me the way and make me ready to follow it.

It is dangerous to delay, yet perilous to go forward.

Answer my petition and show me the way.

As the wounded go to the doctor in search of aid,

so do I come to You. O Lord, give Your peace to my heart. Amen.

And any mention of Sweden has to be an excuse for a throwback photo from my stop off in Stockholm three years ago; first of all, dusk over the Swedish Archipelago (thousands of little islands), and then the Australian family doing what is compulsory at the Abba Museum (three years ago? Mamma Mia!).

Enjoy the end of the week and let's look forward to a somewhat slightly less restrictive weekend...!

And remember, St. Bernadette's is not closed. We're just doing things differently for a while, until we are allowed to gather together once more, more stronger, more faithful, more loving, more creative, and more grateful for the amazing community that is St. Bernadette's.

With love and faith in Jesus.

Fr. P.